



Episode 1x19:
"THE PERFECT SUNSET"

Written by
George W. Krubski

Edited by
Shawn Morris

Producer: David Elmer
Head Writer: George W. Krubski
Art Director: Sean Young

Disclaimer: The crew of the Serenity, the 'Verse in which they live, and their fellow inhabitants are the property of Joss Whedon, Universal Studios, and/or Fox Television. They are used in this work of fan fiction with love and respect, but without permission.

EXT. SPACE – VISTAS – ESTABLISHING

VISTAS is a Saturn-line GAS GIANT, surrounded by dozens of small MOONS and a system of RINGS composed of icy debris floating on a river-like torrent.

EXT. SPACE – THE CAROUSEL – ESTABLISHING

THE CAROUSEL is a large, run-down looking space station resting at the inner edge of the planetary rings. The space station resembles three wagon wheels stacked on top of one another, which a large central hub, and each of the spokes leading to an airlock.

The Carousel can accommodate four dozen SHIPS, and about half that number are currently docked there, with some of the larger ships tethered by lines rather than attached directly to the airlocks.

SERENITY, pretty much average for size and appearance of the ships, is docked on the "space" side of lowest level of the station (away from the planetary rings).

INT. THE CAROUSEL – THE HUB – NIGHT

The HUB is a massive, chaotic swap meet, practically the size of a football field. It seems that anything can be had here, for the right price. Illegal arms, small vehicles, livestock, even slaves are being bought, sold and auctioned by the crowd.

The Hub has a variety of large entrances, each of which leads down one of the "spokes" of the lowest level.

MAL REYNOLDS and INARA stroll through the crowd, looking for someone.

MAL
You see him?

INARA
In this crowd? Jayne doesn't exactly stand out...

MERCHANT
Fighting cocks! Getcher fighting cocks right here!

Inara pauses as a ROOSTER runs out in front of them.

MAL

You want one? Could get it for you as a going away present.

(beat)

Which reminds me... When are you going away? Thought you were gettin' off on New Melbourne. Been there and gone and it seems you're still on my boat.

They continue walking through the crowd.

INARA

(sighs)

As I told you, Captain, I thought they would have a place for me on New Melbourne. I've spoken to the Guild Council, and they assure me they'll send me a wave as soon—

MAL

You just let me know when you want off. Got a place on Serenity til then. 'Course, I wish you'd tell the crew.

INARA

I'll tell them when—

MAL

(surly)

When the time is right. Yeah, yeah, I know. You don't tell 'em soon, I will!

INARA

Mal, I'd appreciate if you'd allow—

But Mal's no longer listening, but glaring at a slave auction, where a large, forlorn looking MAN stands chained next to the AUCTIONEER.

AUCTIONEER

Good teeth, strong back!

Inara touches his arm gently, indicating they should move on. Mal nods, but gives a backward look over his shoulder, jaw tight with anger.

PARKER (OS)

Mal! Malcolm Reynolds? Captain!

Mal turns to look at the sound of the yell. PARKER, forty-ish, handsome, Mediterranean, dressed in expensive clothing, rushes up.

PARKER (cont'd)

Thought I saw your bird on my way in!

The two men clasp hands.

MAL

Parker. Great to see you.
(looking around)
You run across Jayne?

PARKER

Jayne? That big bastard's still runnin' with you? Figured he'd've crossed you and wound up in a shallow grave by now!

MAL

You and me both.

PARKER

Hey, I heard a rumor you've got a preacher you use for a distraction? Folks're calling your crew the Altar Boys. That ain't true, is it?

MAL

(deflecting)

So you look like you done okay for yourself.

As the two men converse, Inara stands by, waiting to be introduced.

PARKER

Leaving Badger, hookin' up with the Holden Boys... One of the best decisions I ever made!

(beat)

You're not still with his highness, are you?

MAL

(shakes his head)

Did a few jobs for Bernoulli, but we're runnin' mostly independent these days.

In the background a MERCHANT passes by on a MULE loaded down with BOXES clearly imprinted as Alliance goods. Neither Mal nor Parker bats an eye.

PARKER

You want, I can put in a good word for you with Mingo and Fanta.

MAL

Heard good things about those two. Also heard they're a little... unusual.

PARKER

(shrugs)

Better'n Badger, anyway. They may go on too much, but they don't make you bow and scrape like that little weasel, demanding respect.

(beat)

Acts like he's the king of Londinium.

MAL

The queen, more like.

Both men laugh.

MAL (cont'd)

Want that kind of trouble, I'd just get me a whor—

He cuts himself off, realizing Inara's standing there, arms crossed.

MAL (cont'd)

Parker, this is Inara. Inara, Parker.

Parker executes a bow that manages to be both comical and respectful.

INARA

Very nice to meet you. So you and Mal are old friends?

PARKER

Used to run together a lot when we worked for Badger.

(to Mal)

Zoe cut Wash loose yet?

KAYLEE (OS)

Smile, everyone!

KAYLEE is standing up in the passenger seat of a shiny new HOVER-MULE, JAYNE next to her, behind the wheel. She holds a CAPTURE (future camera), which she points at them, taking a picture. There are a few large PACKAGES and a PILE OF PARTS strapped to the back.

As Mal and Parker approach the hover-mule, both admiring its lines, Kaylee hops off and joins Inara.

JAYNE

(proudly)

Pretty cunning, huh?

Mal can't take his eyes off the hover-mule. Parker whistles. Meanwhile, Kaylee shows off her capture to Inara, who nods and smiles.

KAYLEE

Took the last of my Lassiter money, but I think it was worth it!

Inara nods, takes the capture when Kaylee offers it, and studies for a moment.

As Mal and Parker walk a slow circuit around the hover-mule, Jayne pulls out a small POUCH, which jingles with some coin (not much, but some).

JAYNE

Even got us some change, Captain. Discount.

He tosses the pouch to Mal.

MAL

On account of your intimidating manner?

JAYNE

Nah. Seller heard we's the crew done in Niska. Seems Niska bein' dead's been good business for more'n a few.

PARKER

Adelai Niska?

MAL

(over Parker)

Word's spreadin' this quick?

JAYNE

Sure.

(beat)

Well... I told 'im.

Inara points the capture at Mal. Mal, seeing this, smiles and strikes a mock-heroic pose in front of the hover-mule.

As if in response to Inara's handling of the capture, a loud CLAXON blares through the Hub.

MAL

(looking around)

What the—?

INT. SERENITY – COCKPIT – NIGHT

WASH is in the pilot's seat, ZOE standing behind him, a hand on his shoulder. Both are looking out Serenity's front window, and neither looks happy about what they see. Wash hits buttons on the console, not taking his eyes off the window.

WASH
(into the comm)
Mal!

MAL (OS)
(via the comm)
What's going on?

WASH
Um... You better get back here.

ZOE
Now.

EXT. SPACE – THE CAROUSEL – SAME TIME

Serenity sits attached to the Carousel, facing out into space.

Approaching the Carousel are a half-dozen ALLIANCE PATROL BOATS (twice the length of Serenity), supported by a dozen and a half SMALLER VESSELS (including GUNSHIPS like the one from "The Message", and TROOP TRANSPORTS).

The small Alliance armada closes on the Carousel like a school of hungry sharks.



Act One

INT. THE CAROUSEL – THE HUB – SAME TIME

The claxons sound and the crowd begins to panic.

MAL
(into his comm)
What's going on?

WASH
(via the comm)
Um... You better get—

Any additional response is drowned out.

LOUDSPEAKER
ALLIANCE RAID!

Like a call-to-arms, the two words spur the crowd to action. Folks run in every direction, grabbing goods (sometimes even their own). In the midst of the chaos, Mal rushes forward, grabs Inara by the arm and pulls her toward the hover-mule. He helps her into the passenger seat, then looks at Jayne, indicating he should get in the back.

JAYNE
Come on, Mal!

KAYLEE (OS)
Captain!

Mal and Jayne stop arguing and turn to see Kaylee a few meters away, looking scared, being pushed away from them by the throng.

EXT. SPACE – THE CAROUSEL – SAME TIME

The exterior of the Carousel is almost as chaotic. The patrol boats block the outlaw ships trying to escape, while the gunships fire disabling shots at some of those still docked at the space station.

One of the troop transports has already docked with the Carousel, and two more are close behind.

INT. SERENITY – COCKPIT – SAME TIME

Wash taps the comm and looks up at Zoe, shaking his head.

ZOE
They'll be here.

INT. THE CAROUSEL – THE HUB – SAME TIME

Mal takes a few steps toward Kaylee. Jayne hops off the hover-mule to follow.

MAL
Kaylee!

She gets knocked down by someone in the crowd. Folks are dropping goods, escaping on mules, horses, and the like. In the background, some of the slaves seem to have taken the opportunity to try to fight their way free.

KAYLEE
Captain! Jayne!

Jayne starts punching his way to Kaylee. A FIGHTING COCK rushes up to him and he jumps back.

JAYNE
Goram chicken!

In the rush, Mal loses sight of Kaylee.

MAL
Kaylee!

Suddenly, Parker bursts out of the crowd, pulling a somewhat-battered Kaylee by the hand.

PARKER
Lose something, Mal?

He pushes Kaylee into Mal's arms. Mal swings her around and puts her in the hover-mule seat behind Inara.

JAYNE
Mal!

Jayne has drawn his gun and is pointing it toward one of the entrances, where ALLIANCE SOLDIERS are in pitched battle with some of the MERCHANTS.

INT. SERENITY – COCKPIT – SAME TIME

Wash is alone now, flipping switches and hitting buttons.

WASH
Any time, captain, any time...

INT. THE CAROUSEL – THE HUB – SAME TIME

Mal settles into the driver's seat of the hover-mule. Jayne, sitting behind him, stares nervously at the Alliance soldiers. They seem to be hung up with their current opponents, but that'll only last so long.

PARKER
Mal! Can you fit one more?

He looks at the Alliance soldiers, then back at Mal.

JAYNE
Mal, he'll slow us down...

KAYLEE
Captain!

Mal looks over his shoulder at the two of them, then at Parker.

EXT. SPACE – THE CAROUSEL – SAME TIME

The raid continues. A few of the ships previously docked at the Carousel have gotten away, but the patrol boats and some of the gunships are pursuing.

A gunship swoops down at Serenity, targeting one of the engine pods.

INT. SERENITY – COCKPIT – SAME TIME

Wash looks up from controls to see the gunship swooping in at the ship.

WASH
<Monkey feces!>

The gunship blows up, and an OUTLAW SHIP jets overhead.

BOOK (OS)
Close one.

SHEPHERD BOOK has joined Wash in the cockpit, standing behind him.

WASH
Think we're outta close ones, Shepherd. Could probably use a miracle or two right about now.

INT. THE CAROUSEL – HALLWAY – NIGHT

This large hallway is one of the "spokes." It's a tunnel with corrugated metal walls and conduits and pipes running along the sides.

The hover-mule chugs down the hallway, slowed somewhat by the extra weight of the equipment, and its five passengers (Parker is sitting on the equipment, facing forward. As Mal drives, Jayne keeps looking over his shoulder.

JAYNE
(to Parker)
Down!

Parker squeezes as low as he can, and Alliance soldiers are visible in the distance behind them. Jayne fires, more out of frustration than because he can hit anything. The Alliance soldiers return fire, with just as much success as Jayne.

JAYNE (cont'd)
Go faster with four...

INT. THE CAROUSEL – AIRLOCK – NIGHT

The airlock is at the end of the hallway. Serenity's AIRLOCK RAMP opens into the room, across from the hallway entrance, and two BLAST-DOORS block the sides. An ACCESS LADDER and a broad, open FREIGHT ELEVATOR allow access to the level above.

Zoe stands on Serenity's ramp, holding her gun, looking down the hallway, watching the hover-mule approaching, followed by a dozen Alliance soldiers, who, although on foot, are not far behind.

She lines up a shot, appearing to sight on the hover-mule. As the hover-mule enters the airlock, Mal looks at her in alarm.

She ignores him and fires once the hover-mule is past, hitting one of the PIPES on the side of the hallway.

As the Alliance soldiers surge forward, they are stopped by an explosion of steam from the pipes.

ZOE
Hurry, sir!

She ducks back inside, and Mal seems intent on driving the hover-mule up the ramp at current speed.

JAYNE
Slow down! You'll scratch it!

Mal gets to the foot of the ramp and slams on the brakes. Parker nearly flies off, but uses the momentum to leap free.

PARKER
Thanks for the ride, Mal. That's one I owe you!

Parker rushes for the ladder while Mal carefully guides the hover-mule into the airlock ramp.

INT. THE CAROUSEL – HALLWAY – NIGHT

The Alliance soldiers fight their way through the steam just in time to see the airlock door closing. They open fire, but to no avail.

EXT. SPACE – THE CAROUSEL

Serenity launches, and a few seconds later, PARKER'S SHIP, smaller, more nimble, joins them.

The majority of Alliance activity seems to be dedicated to keeping ships trapped at the Carousel, but two of the patrol boats and some of the gunships are pursuing escapees.

A large SLAVER SHIP, squat and lobster-like, with magnetic grapples and a variety of weapons systems, fires on one of the Alliance troop carriers, rupturing its hull.

A patrol boat swings around to deal with the slaver ship.

INT. SERENITY – COCKPIT – NIGHT

Mal and Jayne join Wash and Book in the cockpit.

WASH

Hey, is that Parker's ship?

Wash whips the ship to the side. Mal and Jayne go tumbling.

WASH (cont'd)

Might want to grab something.

Before Mal can answer, an ALARM sounds.

JAYNE

What's that?

WASH

(zen calm)

It means someone doesn't like us.

In the forward window, a MISSILE sails past, narrowly missing Parker's ship.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO HOLD – SAME TIME

As the ship rocks due to Wash's evasive maneuvers, Zoe and Kaylee secure the hover-mule. SIMON helps stow some of the packages. Inara is by the stairs to the upper CATWALK, holding on to the railing, and RIVER stands in the middle of the room, feet planted firmly, rolling with each rock of the ship, maintaining her perfect balance.

As Simon lifts one of the PACKAGES from the rear of the vehicle, Kaylee is working on the mule, and the two lean close. He gets a good look at her face.

SIMON

You're hurt.

He reaches out toward her with genuine concern.

KAYLEE

(smiles)

Ain't nothin'. Just got a little tight in the Carousel.

SIMON

Still, I—

The ship floor cants at a forty-five degree angle. Barrels and crates go flying. Inara tumbles up the stairs to get out of their way. Kaylee and Simon are thrown together, and Zoe grabs a strap on the hover-mule to keep her balance.

River stands like a tree in a storm.

SIMON

(to Kaylee)

Are you all right?

ZOE (OS)

Strap it down, you two!

They both look at her, snapping to attention like children caught in the cookie jar. Zoe tightens a strap on the hover-mule, looking annoyed.

The ship QUIVERS, as if in response to a near-miss or graze.

INARA

Did we just get hit?

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

Serenity, rocking and rolling, dives through a blossom of fire and debris, pursued by one of the patrol boats. Parker's ship is nowhere to be seen.

INT. SERENITY – COCKPIT – SAME TIME

Mal leans forward over Wash, looking at the flame and wreckage in their window. Book, ignoring that danger, is fiddling with the computer at the co-pilot's station.

A piece of debris bounces off the window.

WASH

Was that Parker who just got blown up?

JAYNE
There goes that favor.

INT. ALLIANCE PATROL BOAT – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

CAPTAIN CHIEN, early forties, with intense eyes and patrician features, stands at the forward window of the bridge, watching Serenity try to escape.

ALLIANCE OFFICER
Sir, sensor locks appear to have been damaged by debris from the Palomino-class vessel.

Chien doesn't turn.

CHIEN
Target manually.

ALLIANCE OFFICER
Yessir.

In the forward window, missiles dog Serenity, missing once, twice, three times as the Firefly-class ship bobs and weaves.

LIEUTENANT WALLACE, mid-twenties, handsome and energetic, steps up next to Chien.

WALLACE
Captain Pennington has requested assistance, sir. They are encountering unexpected resistance from one of the slave ships.

CHIEN
Thanks you, Lieutenant.
(beat)
Let them go.

As his ship turns, he wistfully watches Serenity escape.

EXT. SPACE – THE CAROUSEL

Chien's patrol boat turns back around, heading toward the lobster-like slaver ship, which has clamped down on one of the other patrol boats using its magnetic grapplers.

INT. SERENITY – COCKPIT – SAME TIME

Wash flies steady. Mal and Jayne look like they're waiting for the other shoe to drop. Book continues his work on the computer.

JAYNE

How come we ain't dead?

WASH

Love to say it was me, but they just stopped.

MAL

Don't much care why we're still alive, Wash. Good flyin', now get us to the edge of the system and go for hard burn. I want to be as far away from here as—

BOOK

That wise, Captain?

MAL

You got somethin' to say, Preacher?

Book finally looks up.

BOOK

If they're following standard Alliance procedure, there are probably additional patrol boats stationed as sentries along the most obvious exit vectors. It's my understanding that this planet was chosen as home for the Carousel because of the number of moons that are of use as hiding places.

Mal and Jayne exchange a "Why does a preacher know that?" look.

MAL

Keep talkin'.

BOOK

Could be we might benefit from laying low on one of those moons for a few days.

MAL

(to Wash)

You keep gettin' us away from here.

(to Book)

Got any suggestions?

Book smiles and turns the computer screen toward Mal. It contains a picture of a small, blue MOON. Like the Carousel, it is close to the planetary rings.

EXT. OCEAN MOON – DAY – ESTABLISHING

The moon appears to be covered completely in water. Serenity swoops in low, pulling waves in its wake.

INT. SERENITY – COCKPIT – DAY

Jayne is now sitting in the second seat, looking bored, while Mal and Book stand behind Wash.

JAYNE

Great. So insteada gettin' blowed up, we can get drowned.

WASH

I hear drowning's a peaceful way to go.

JAYNE

So's bein' strangled.

BOOK

(putting a hand on Wash's shoulder)
Head closer to the equator, son. We should find some islands there.

Jayne gives Book a curious stare.

BOOK (cont'd)

Basic planetary topography.

JAYNE

They teach ya that at shepherdin' school?

Wash ignores them, staring through the forward window. His face lights up.

WASH

<Oh, sweet chubby Buddha, sometimes I love my life>, this might be my favorite moon ever!

MAL

Find a spot. Set us down.

EXT. SERENITY – AIRLOCK – DAY

CLOSE-UP of Mal's face. He's wearing a SPACE SUIT, and looking around with a very serious expression on his face.

MAL
Looks good. Air's breathable.

Even before he's finished speaking, Serenity's airlock hisses open and the ramp lowers.

EXT. ISLAND – ESTABLISHING

If the immediate area is any judge, the island is a tropical paradise, a light jungle that looks like it would be at home in the Caribbean.

A beautiful river with white sandy shores winds through a decent-sized clearing, and Wash has parked Serenity so that it straddles the river, nose over one shore, airlock ramp on the other.

EXT. SERENITY – DAY

Mal doesn't even have his helmet off before the crew is spilling down the ramp. All of them look around in wonder as they step off the boat. Zoe and Wash are first.

ZOE
Have to say, this might be one of the best landings you've ever made.

Kaylee, River and Simon come right behind them.

KAYLEE
Oh, my gosh! It's beautiful!

SIMON
This place is amazing.

RIVER
(whispered wonder)
So loud. Fly, fly, swim, swim, scurry, scurry.

Kaylee takes River by the hand and pulls her out, down the ramp. Simon stays on the ramp, carefully taking off his shoes and rolling up his pants.

Jayne and Book follow.

JAYNE
Next time I need a miracle, Shepherd, I know who I'm talkin' to.

Finally, Inara walks down the ramp at a regal and sedate pace, taking in the scenery.

INARA
Mal... This place is...

MAL
Yeah, I know.
(yelling at the group)
Hey! Don't go too far!

INT. ALLIANCE PATROL BOAT – BRIDGE – SPACE

Captain Chien looks out at the Carousel. All resistance has been squashed. The lobster-like slaver ship has a series of scorch marks and a large hole in it, but looks otherwise intact.

Wallace, holding a piece of paper, approaches.

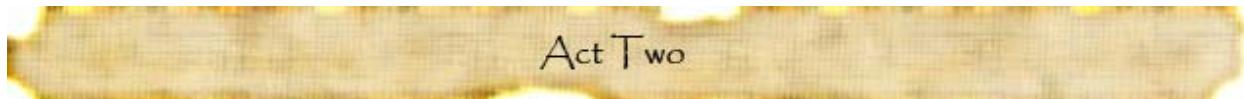
WALLACE
Priority alert sir.

Chien nods, takes the paper and reads it.

CHIEN
Forward this to the other captains. Any resources they can spare are to begin an immediate search of the system for the indicated vessel.

He hands the paper back to Wallace and turns to the window again.

CHIEN (cont'd)
They got away from us once, but not a second time.



INT. SERENITY – INARA'S SHUTTLE – DAY

Inara sits in front of the CORTEX SCREEN that hangs on her wall like a mirror. The client portion is currently deactivated, and she highlights another section, bringing up the statement "No messages waiting."

Behind her, Mal clears his throat.

She's startled, and taps away the message, turning off the screen.

INARA
Captain, I didn't hear you ask to come in.

MAL
(smiling)
You so rarely do.

Mal has a bottle of wine in each hand.

INARA
To what do I owe this intrusion?

MAL
Thought you were about, and figured I'd see if I could
convince you to head outside. Not a day to be cooped up,
you ask me.

She stands.

INARA
I was just checking to see if I'd received any new
messages.

MAL
And have you?

She shakes her head and walks over to him, taking one of the bottles of wine and studying it.

MAL (cont'd)
From that caper we pulled for Li Shen a few months back.
Got another bottle I was savin' for dinner, but this is
pretty much the last of it.

INARA
Ah, yes, the infamous, "I'll pay you in real coin next time,
I promise," caper.

MAL
I see you've heard of my exploits.

She smiles, looks around the inside of the shuttle, hands the bottle back to Mal.

INARA
You know, I didn't think I would, but when I'm gone, I'll
miss this.

Awkward beat. They both look away.

INARA (cont'd)
Shall we head outside?

INT. SERENITY – CARGO HOLD – DAY

In the background, Mal (with wine bottles) and Inara come down the stairs. They walk past Simon, who is at the edge of the open CARGO BAY DOORS, looking down at Kaylee. Kaylee is swimming directly beneath the doors, up to her neck in water.

KAYLEE

Come on in, Simon. The water's so beautiful!

SIMON

I can't...

KAYLEE

(teasing)

Your shoes are already off. That's a big step!

By now, Mal and Inara are gone.

SIMON

I don't have a suit.

KAYLEE

(coquettish)

Who says you need a suit?

SIMON

I—er, I mean—

Out of nowhere, Jayne rushes past, wearing mangy shorts. He whoops and cannonballs through the cargo bay doors.

EXT. SERENITY – DAY

Mal and Inara come out onto the open ramp. Book is at the base of the ramp, bare feet in the sand, enjoying the view.

Zoe and Wash are a little ways down the shore, lying down, relaxing, sunning themselves. She's dressed in an exotic-looking sarong, and he's finally found a place where his Hawaiian shirt fits in. He's also wearing shorts and a ludicrous straw hat.

In the distance beyond them, River prances about, apparently chasing a butterfly.

Mal and Inara join Book.

MAL

Nice port you found us, Shepherd.

BOOK

The view is quite amazing, isn't it?

MAL

Almost nice enough to make me believe your God's got
the way of it.

BOOK

Could be God put this place here, but see that?

(pointing to palm trees)

Vegetation looks suspiciously like something from Earth-
that-was.

Down the beach, Zoe and Wash have noticed them and stand up to head over.

MAL

You sayin' this place was terraformed?

INARA

A paradise project. I thought they were just myth.

BOOK

Every myth's got a kernel of truth at its heart, doesn't it?

Wash and Zoe join them.

WASH

Can I name it, Captain? I mean, Jayne's got that crappy
moon where he's a hero. Can I have this one? Please? I
promise I'll name an ocean after you.

MAL

Shepherd was the one pointed us here. Anyone claims it,
should be him.

BOOK

(to Wash)

Honor's all yours, son.

Wash smiles and rubs his hands together, pondering. Then, he strikes a pose,
miming planting a flag.

WASH

We shall rule over this fertile little moon. And we shall call
it—

(dramatic pause)

Wash's Moon!

Zoe raises an eyebrow and looks at him.

WASH (cont'd)

I mean, Zoe's Moon!
(beat, still posing)
Yes, yes, to show the depth of our love of Zoe, we shall
name an entire moon in her honor!

INARA

(to Zoe)

You're a lucky woman, Zoe. Many's the man who
promised me the moon and the stars, and not one has
yet delivered.

Zoe laughs, then hugs Wash.

ZOE

I am lucky, aren't I?

WASH

Yes, yes, you are.
(overdramatic)
For you are wed to the mighty pirate-king of Zoe's Moon!

Zoe gives him a "don't push it, honey" look, and he smiles contritely and stops posturing.

ZOE

(to Mal)

Can I take it from those bottles you're carrying that
you've considered my request?

WASH

What request?

MAL

Can't see no harm to it.

He hands her one of the bottles. She smiles and turns to Wash.

ZOE

Asked the Captain if we could take the spare shuttle,
explore the coastline. Maybe even have a picnic.

WASH

A night away from the parents! Very exciting!

Wash is so enthusiastic that he's practically bouncing up and down.

MAL

Not a night. Just a few hours. We ain't locals here. Who knows what comes out when things get dark? You see sunset, you head back.

They all turn to the sound of splashing and laughing in the water. From under the belly of the ship, Kaylee comes sailing, apparently thrown by Jayne, who treads water behind her. (For the record, she was just funnin' Simon and is, in fact, wearing a bathing suit).

BOOK

Any plans for that other bottle, Captain?

MAL

Didn't think preachers were s'posed to drink, Shepherd.

Kaylee and Jayne are splashing a little closer now.

BOOK

Nothing wrong with a little of the grape in moderation. I was thinking I'd head downriver a bit, see if I might be able to catch something for dinner. Bottle like that might make the afternoon much sunnier.

JAYNE

(swimming closer)

Talkin' about goin' fishin', preacher?

BOOK

Would you like to join me?

SIMON (OS)

Have you seen River?

Simon is coming down the ramp, looking wet and miserable. He's pretty much soaked from the chest down.

JAYNE

(snickering)

Told you not to stand so close to the gorram edge, doc.

Simon gives Jayne a look that should, by all rights, freeze the water around him. Jayne just grins back.

Kaylee comes out of the water and approaches the group.

KAYLEE

Oh, Simon.

(beat)

And that was one of your nice vests, too!

SIMON

I should... It'll be all right.

(beat)

I shouldn't have been so close to the edge.

KAYLEE

(brightly)

So what're we all doin' standing around at the bottom of
the ramp?

WASH

We're gonna have a picnic!

KAYLEE

(misunderstanding)

A picnic? Shiny!

(to the miserable Simon)

Doesn't that sound nice, Simon?

WASH

No, I meant—

SIMON

Yes, I suppose a picnic could be very nice.

Kaylee smiles at Simon and he brightens somewhat, although he's still all bedraggled and awkward.

Wash looks at Zoe, then indicates Simon and Kaylee. She gives him a "Are you sure?" look, then nods.

WASH

(to Kaylee)

The four of us'll take the shuttle, head over to the far side
of the island—

Beat. Kaylee is more excited than before, presumably having figured out it's a "double date."

KAYLEE

The far side? We'll be like explorers.

WASH

I was thinking pirates. Picnic-eating, wine-swilling pirates!

SIMON
The four of us? River—

Down the shore, River is now standing staring at a flower, possibly talking to it.

BOOK
I'll look after your sister, son. You young folk go and have a good time.

Kaylee smiles at Simon and takes his hand.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO HOLD – DAY

Mal stands alone in the center of the cargo hold, eyes closed, listening to the silence.

A beat, then he realizes Inara is standing on the UPPER CATWALK, looking down.

MAL
It's strange. Too quiet.

INARA
I rather like it for a change.

She walks down the stairs to join him.

INARA (cont'd)
I don't know that you and I have ever been alone like this on the ship before, Captain.

She stands very close, looking up at him.

MAL
I...
(beat)
You know, I think you're right.

He walks away from her.

MAL (cont'd)
Ship doesn't seem right, the whole crew gone.

INARA
With the crew gone, are you still the captain?

MAL
Think it's that easy? Can you stop bein' a companion just like that?

INARA
(smiling)
Why don't we both give it a try?

EXT. ZOE'S MOON – FAR SHORE – DAY

Zoe, Wash, Kaylee, and Simon sit around a blanket covered with food (mostly protein and some fruit picked from nearby trees), wrappers, and sundries. They're laughing, and Simon is filling Zoe's empty wine glass as he tells a story. The SHUTTLE is parked on the beach a little ways down, the ocean lapping at its front landing struts.

ZOE
And still didn't figure it out? Seriously?

SIMON
No. I mean, can you imagine? The prices were in platinum, and my father... He's a very intelligent man, but sometimes not quick with the math.

KAYLEE
Did you tell him?

SIMON
Well, what I did was... He was insistent that we drink a round, since it'd taken us so long to get there, so I looked at him and I said, "Dad... Look at the prices. That's not just a wine you're paying for."

They all laugh.

KAYLEE
And that's the only time you were in a brothel?

SIMON
There was one other time.

WASH
Of course. Let's not forget the bordello we were hired to protect.

There's an easy sense of camaraderie among the four. Without Jayne and River around, Simon seems to be able to fit in a little better.

SIMON
(laughing)
Okay, TWO other times! Oh, wait, I forgot. Three.

KAYLEE
I want to hear about those.

SIMON
You still haven't told us your brothel story.

KAYLEE
(holding up her glass)
I'm not sure I'm tipsy enough yet.

Simon pours the last of the wine into her glass. As if that's a cue, Wash and Zoe exchange a look.

WASH
As exciting as all these brothel tales are, I think the missus and I need to spend a little alone time in the shuttle.

KAYLEE
(to Simon, hushed tone)
They're gonna have sex.

Wash, standing up, rubs Kaylee's head.

WASH
Yes, yes, we are.

He reaches down and offers Zoe a hand. She smiles down at Simon and Kaylee.

ZOE
This has been nice. Really.

Wash tries to lift his wife over his shoulder, fails miserably, and settles for running to the shuttle after her. Kaylee and Simon laugh, a little awkwardly.

KAYLEE
Do you want to—

SIMON
The beach.
(points)
Do you want to... A walk?

She smiles.

KAYLEE
Love to.

EXT. ZOE'S MOON – RIVERBANK – DAY

Book is sitting dozing on the riverbank, fishing pole in his hands. He wakes with a bit of a start and looks around.

Jayne's sitting next to him, also fishing. They have a bucket with a few fish in it between them, as well as the open bottle of wine. And a heavy looking rifle.

BOOK

Dozed off. Must be the heat.

JAYNE

(good-humored)

That or the years.

BOOK

Where's River?

Jayne reaches down to make sure his HUNTING KNIFE is on his belt. He shrugs.

JAYNE

I wasn't the one said I'd look after her.

He returns his attention to the river and his fishing pole.

BOOK

River?

Beat.

RIVER (OS)

Over here.

Book stands, putting down the pole, and heads in the direction of her voice. Jayne continues to fish for a beat, then—

JAYNE

Gorrammit.

He puts down the pole, grabs the rifle, and follows Book. He gets two steps, then comes back and grabs the wine bottle with his free hand.

EXT. ZOE'S MOON – NEARBY RIVERBANK – DAY

Book and Jayne break through the light brush to see River staring down at something on the ground.

BOOK
River? What are you doing?

RIVER
(not looking up)
Watching.

They get closer. She's staring at a dying fish as it flops on the ground, bleeding out from the gills.

RIVER (cont'd)
To see when it realizes it's not a fish anymore.

BOOK
River...

RIVER
Stopped being a fish once it was on the hook, but it didn't know.

JAYNE
What's ruttin' wrong with you, girl?

He grimaces at the suffering fish, steps forward, and smashes the fish with the butt of the rifle, killing it with a single hard strike. River looks up at him as if dealing with a child.

RIVER
(shaking her head)
Now I'll never know.

Jayne, a little rattled, takes a swig of the wine.

INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM – DAY

Mal and Inara are at the dining room table, sitting across from one another, a WEI CHI BOARD between them. The bottle of wine is on its side, apparently empty. Mal is holding a sake bottle, from which he takes a small sip before putting it down on the table next to the board.

INARA
Your move, Mal.

He examines the board and makes a move, flipping some of her stones. He seems pretty impressed with himself.

INARA (cont'd)
Not bad.

She silently counts the number of stones, and takes a swig, much longer than his sip.

MAL
(slurring a bit)
Told you I was good at this game, Inara.

She ignores him and makes a game-winning move.

MAL (cont'd)
Wha—? Now how did you—?

She smiles and slides the bottle toward him.

INARA
Drink up.

He takes the bottle and the last of its contents, upending it and studying it curiously, as if he believes there should be more.

INARA (cont'd)
Another game? Best out of seven?

MAL
Don't believe there's enough liquor left on the ship to take us there.

Inara stands cautiously. She's tipsy, but in better shape than he is.

INARA
(curtseying)
Thank you for the game, kind sir.

Mal stands, swaying more than a little, bows deeply and loses his balance, almost toppling to the side. His hand hits the wine bottle, sending it spinning off the table. It hits the ground but does not shatter.

Beat, then Inara cracks up.

MAL
That's not funny!

INARA
Yes, it is. A little.

MAL
(drunken laughing)
Okay, maybe a little.

She leans forward and starts to clean up the wei chi board. He moves forward to help.

MAL (cont'd)
Let me help you with—

They both look down. Seems they reached for the same thing at the same time and he's holding her hand. They look at each other for a beat.

INARA
Mal, I...

A beat, then he takes his hand away, looks away.

MAL
Can I ask you a question?

INARA
Anything.

MAL
Ain't gonna ask why you're leavin', since I don't 'xpect I'll
get a straight answer. But...
(beat)
Why'd you stay this long?

INARA
I like it here. I really do. I'll miss this when I'm gone. I'll
miss everyone.
(beat)
Well, maybe not Jayne.

Mal raises an imaginary glass to toast that sentiment.

INARA (cont'd)
I feel like I'm a part of something when I'm here.
(lightly)
Even if it is a crew of <petty> thieves.

They look at each other across the table, over the gameboard. They both want to say more, but neither is willing to make the first move. It's an emotional Mexican standoff.

MAL
You helped us with more than a few jobs, to be sure, but
you were never part of the crew.

As the words leave his mouth, he realizes what he's said.

MAL (cont'd)
Inara, I...

INARA
(coldly)
No, I never was part of the crew, was I?
(beat)
And it seems you can't stop being the captain, even for
an hour.

Without another word, she storms out through the rear entrance.

MAL
Inara!

He watches her go, but doesn't follow. He kicks the downed wine bottle in frustration, then heads for the forward entrance himself.

EXT. ZOE'S MOON – RIVERBANK – SUNSET

Book and Jayne (looking more at ease) sit on the riverbed, watching a beautiful rainbow-hued sunset. Jayne finishes off the last of the wine.

River, standing nearby, reaches down and snatches Book's cigar right out of his mouth. The preacher is startled, but as he looks up and sees her comically smoking it, he laughs and turns back to the sunset.

INT. SHUTTLE – SUNSET

Zoe and Wash make love as the sunset streams in through the window of the shuttle, shining off their sweaty bodies.

EXT. ZOE'S MOON – FAR SHORE – SUNSET

Simon and Kaylee walk down the beach, holding hands and laughing.

She bends down to pick up a seashell, and when she straightens to show it to him, he puts a hand to her cheek.

She looks up at him, and he leans down toward her.

With the sunset beach as their backdrop, Simon kisses Kaylee.

INT. SERENITY – SHUTTLE – SUNSET

Inara, looking rather frustrated, checks her messages again on the Cortex screen.
Still nothing.

She catches sight of the sunlight streaming in through the shuttles window, and is captivated by the beauty of the sunset.

INT. SERENITY – COCKPIT – SUNSET

Mal watches the same sunset from the cockpit, sitting alone.

Act Three

INT. ALLIANCE PATROL BOAT – BRIDGE – SPACE

Wallace approaches Chien.

WALLACE

None of the blockade ships report contact. It's possible that they managed to make it out of the system undetected...

CHIEN

But more likely that they're still here.

WALLACE

Apparently a number of the moons here were once used as hideouts for pirates, smugglers and the like.

CHIEN

(philosophically)

If that's true, they could hide for weeks. Or months.

(beat)

Have we received the support I requested?

WALLACE

(nods)

Captain Pennington is still requisitioning the majority of the forces for the Carousel.

Chien looks away, out the window.

CHIEN

Do you think they're hiding on one of the moons?

WALLACE
That's where I'd be, sir.

CHIEN
Good instincts, Wallace. Select the three likeliest locations and send a gunship to each for recon.

Wallace nods, but doesn't leave.

CHIEN (cont'd)
Something else, Wallace?

WALLACE
Sir, I was reviewing our orders. We're to capture this vessel intact and quarantine the crew?

CHIEN
Yes. That will make it more difficult, won't it?

WALLACE
I have an idea, sir.

Chien turns, eyebrow raised in curiosity.

EXT. ZOE'S MOON – FAR SHORE – SUNSET

Simon and Kaylee part, coming up for air. Simon takes a step away and turns toward the ocean.

KAYLEE
(breathless and smiling)
Simon...

SIMON
I'm sorry.

KAYLEE
What?

SIMON
I shouldn't have done that. I'm sorry. It's just... The beach and the sunset, and you looked so beautiful—

KAYLEE
Simon?

He finally turns to look at her.

SIMON

Kaylee, I'm sorry. I have responsibilities. River... I can't...
I shouldn't...
(beat)
Sun's setting. We should go.

He heads back to the shuttle.

Kaylee watches him go, somewhere between stunned and angry.

INT. SHUTTLE – SUNSET

Wash and Zoe lie on the floor, looking tired and sated. When there's a knock on the door, Wash yelps in surprise and they both sit up.

SIMON (OS)

(muffled, through door)
Zoe? Wash? Sorry to intrude, but the Captain said we
should be back by sunset...

WASH

<Buddha-damned nuisance! Won't somebody stuff that
kid's mouth with monkey feces? I'll give you ten
platinum!>

ZOE

(lazy smile)
It's okay, honey. I was done.

WASH

Well, I wasn't!

INT. SERENITY – CARGO HOLD – EVENING

Jayne stomps up the ramp, dogged by River. Book, carrying a bucket of fish,
follows a few steps behind.

RIVER

But when does the fish stop being a fish?

JAYNE

Told ya already, I hate riddles!

BOOK

I don't think it's a riddle she's asking, son.

(to River)

River, that's a question folks've been trying to answer for ages.

They're in the middle of the cargo hold now.

RIVER

When the fish is on the hook, can't pull away, is it still a fish, or just a thing?

JAYNE

Ask me, it's just dinner.

Mal walks onto the upper catwalk.

MAL

Speakin' of, how'd it go?

BOOK

(hoisting the bucket)

Got enough for a fine meal, and then some.

MAL

That's what I like to hear. Zoe tells me they're on the way in. Might be nice if we had something warm and tasty on the table.

Book heads to the stairs, Jayne following. River stays in the cargo hold, watching them as they move toward the galley.

RIVER

(to herself)

Can't get away. Already on the hook.

INT. ALLIANCE PATROL BOAT – BRIDGE – SPACE

Wallace approaches Chien.

WALLACE

One of the targeted moons is mostly aquatic, but ringed by small islands near the equator. Ideal hiding places, if you ask me.

CHIEN

Any word from Pennington?

WALLACE

No additional support, sir. He's responded to our special request, but, otherwise, nothing.

Chien paces away from the window a bit.

CHIEN

I'm sure the troops are needed at the Carousel.

(beat)

Very well. We'll do this without additional support.
Continue to search the other moons, but re-task two
gunships to assist with recon over the islands.

WALLACE

Should I put the ambush into place, sir?

Chien nods.

INT. SERENITY – GALLEY – NIGHT

The crew sits around the table, eating dinner. There's tension between Simon and Kaylee, and Inara is noticeably absent, but it looks like a fine meal, otherwise. The normal tea, sake, and protein are supplemented by steaming fried fish and a variety of local fruit.

WASH

And the doctor had a brothel story that was quite
amusing!

JAYNE

I love me a good brothel story, if you know what I mean.
Doc?

Jayne reaches across the table for a pineapple.

KAYLEE

It's not that kind of story, Jayne.

(beat)

You know our doctor. Too proper for anything fun.

She might as well have sucker-punched Simon for his reaction. No one else sees it coming either, and there's an awkward beat.

WASH

So... Where's Inara?

And it just gets more awkward.

BOOK
More fish?

They all speak up at once, responding in the affirmative, and the plate is passed around.

JAYNE
Shepherd, ain't you supposed to give us bread or somethin' to go with this?

Jayne starts to slice open the pineapple with his hunting knife.

BOOK
I think summoning loaves is quite beyond my ability.

WASH
I don't know, preacher. You sure found us a pretty enough paradise, and it is Sunday, after all.

JAYNE
It is?

BOOK
Indeed.
(looking pointedly at Mal)
Shouldn't you be stealing something?

Mal reacts.

JAYNE
Thought it was Tuesday.

Jayne pops a piece of pineapple into his mouth.

MAL
What're you getting' at, Shepherd?

Inara comes in from the rear entrance, looking around a bit awkwardly. She looks like she might be a little ill, possibly the after-effects of the wine.

KAYLEE
'Nara, hey. Sit down. We've got fresh fish!

INARA
I don't know. I think maybe I'll go back to my shuttle. I'm not feeling—

Folks start shifting so there's room for her. The spot is across from Mal.

WASH

Come on, Inara! Have some fish.

Inara sits and she and Mal look at each other awkwardly. He looks like he wants to apologize, but says nothing. As the two of them stare at each other, plates untouched, the rest continue to eat. Book doles out some more fish. Simon passes a bowl of vegetables to Zoe. Jayne spears a chunk of pineapple on his knife and offers it to the table. Kaylee leans forward and takes it.

The galley is filled with the sound of utensils on plates and chewing.

WASH (cont'd)

(mouth full)

Captain, I think we're gonna stay.

(chews and swallows)

Yeah, Zoe and me, we're gonna collect shells. Trade with the locals. We'll be shell merchants.

JAYNE

The locals is fish.

WASH

I didn't say we'd be successful merchants.

River looks directly at Zoe.

RIVER

She's thinking about it, you know. Thinking about leaving.

Wash looks at Zoe. Zoe looks at Mal.

ZOE

Captain, I...

Mal doesn't react to the interchange, his eyes still on Inara.

JAYNE

Just ignore her. She's been talkin' crazy since we went fishin.'

Simon looks at River sharply.

SIMON

I thought I told you to stay away from him.

Kaylee rolls her eyes.

RIVER

It's okay. We caught fish.

JAYNE

You know what, doc? I'm getting' pretty sick—

He half-rises in his seat, the knife still in his hand.

BOOK

Now, there's no need for this.

WASH

(quietly, to Zoe)

Is she right?

Zoe looks down at her plate.

JAYNE

No, Shepherd, stay outta this. This's between me and his lordship here.

SIMON

What? Are you going to stab me?

WASH

(quietly, to Zoe)

Are you really thinking about leaving?

ZOE

I don't think this is the time or the place...

KAYLEE

Jayne, I know he can be annoying, but why don't you put the knife down?

Jayne seems to realize for the first time that he actually is holding the knife. He drops it and makes a fist instead.

KAYLEE (cont'd)

Better.

BOOK

Jayne, really...

WASH

(to Zoe)

What is the right time and place?

ZOE

Not now, Wash.

Simon stands, defiantly looking at Jayne.

SIMON
Haven't we played this game enough?

WASH
(to Zoe)
If not now, when?

Mal and Inara have continued to look at each other through all of this.

JAYNE
'Parently not, doc.

Book and Kaylee stand as well, trying to get between Simon and Jayne. River scoots her chair back, away from the table, away from everyone, and looks up and back, as if staring at something through the roof of the ship.

Mal looks down at his plate.

INARA
I'm leaving the ship.

Beat.

JAYNE
Leavin' the ship? But it's dark out.

Beat.

Then everyone except River and Mal turn to Inara and start talking at once. Mal stands and starts to walk out of the room, while River continues to stare through the ceiling.

KAYLEE
Inara, no! You can't mean it—

SIMON
Leaving? But—

Zoe looks at Wash.

WASH
Okay, so you were right—

BOOK
I'm sure this is a well-considered decision, but—

JAYNE
Why would you leave now? We's got fish.

River stands, still staring up.

RIVER
The fishermen are here.

There's something in her tone that silences everyone. Wash and Zoe share a look, and Mal, who is almost out the forward exit, turns back.

MAL
Wash?

Wash nods and jumps out of his chair, heading for the forward entrance (and the cockpit)

The proximity alarm sounds throughout the ship.



Act Four

EXT. ZOE'S MOON – NIGHT

Serenity flies over the ocean, driving up, higher and higher, pursued by an ALLIANCE GUNSHIP. The gunship's fire appears to be directed more toward near-misses than hits.

INT. SERENITY – COCKPIT – SAME TIME

Wash is at the controls, Zoe and Mal behind him.

WASH
They haven't hit us yet. That's a good thing.

ZOE
They're herding us.

EXT. ZOE'S MOON – NIGHT

In the distance, two more gunships join the first. With three of them firing, Serenity's mobility is seriously impaired.

INT. SERENITY – GALLEY – NIGHT

Kaylee, Simon, Inara, and Book quickly clear the kitchen table while the deck rolls under them. River is still sitting, sort of in the middle of things, and Jayne stands near the forward entrance, looking around nervously.

BOOK

Best we get this all away as quickly as possible.

Simon, a plate of food in his hand, approaches Kaylee.

SIMON

Kaylee, I—

She doesn't look up, just steps around him.

The ship shudders. Plates and cups skitter on the table. Everyone reaches for something to steady themselves.

JAYNE

(nervous)

What was that? We get hit?

BOOK

Don't think so, son.

KAYLEE

Just breakin' atmo, I think.

EXT. SPACE

Serenity sails through the black, leaving the blue orb of Zoe's Moon behind. The three gunships follow, bracketing it in, driving it in a particular direction.

INT. SERENITY – COCKPIT – SAME TIME

Mal leans anxiously over Wash's shoulder.

WASH

Back off. I need a little more room to maneuver.

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

Serenity pulls away from the gunships. As it does, an Alliance patrol boat sweeps in from the right.

INT. ALLIANCE PATROL BOAT – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Chien looks at Serenity's flank as his ship approaches. Wallace is not on the bridge.

CHIEN

Steady. Just close enough to rattle them.

(beat)

Wallace?

WALLACE (OS)

(via the comm)

On the way, sir.

INT. SERENITY – COCKPIT – SAME TIME

Wash sits calmly, steering the ship, Mal and Zoe still behind him.

WASH

Okay, I think we're awa—Oh, my God!

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

Serenity pulls away from the Alliance patrol boat and the trio of gunships.

It seems like they might be safe, but then, out of the sun's glare, comes the lobster-like slaver ship, magnetic grapplers sparking.

INT. SERENITY – GALLEY – SAME TIME

Clean-up continues. Kaylee approaches Inara.

KAYLEE

Inara... Are you really leaving?

INARA

(looking away)

I'm sorry, Kaylee. I think I need to go to my room.

INT. SERENITY – COCKPIT – SAME TIME

Wash, Zoe, and Mal look through the forward window, all unhappy.

WASH

What the gorram hell is that thing?!?

ZOE
Slaver, by the look of it. Capture ship.

MAL
River.

ZOE
Maybe so, sir.

Wash looks up.

ZOE (cont'd)
They're trying to take us alive because of River.

MAL
And we're good as dead if they do. Wash, we have to get out of here.

WASH
I don't disagree, sir.

EXT. SPACE

Serenity narrowly slips past the slaver ship's magnetic grapples.

The slaver ship immediately comes about, beginning to pursue. In the distance, the gunships and the patrol boat also begin to close.

INT. SERENITY – COCKPIT – SAME TIME

Wash lets out a relieved breath.

MAL
They're still following.

ZOE
We need to get out of here. Now.

WASH
Trying.

MAL
Try harder. They catch us, it's all over.

WASH
There's five of 'em, sir. I'm doing what I can.

Beat.

ZOE
(points)
There.

WASH
No.

ZOE
You can do it.

Mal sees where she's pointing.

MAL
No!

Zoe puts her hand on Wash's shoulder.

ZOE
My honey can do it.

WASH
(deep breath)
I can do it.

EXT. SPACE

Serenity veers toward the PLANETARY RINGS, the five Alliance ships closing in around her.

INT. SERENITY – COCKPIT – SAME TIME

Mal shakes his head.

MAL
What are—Are you sure?

Wash nods.

MAL
Because if you're not sure, we're gonna die!

ZOE
If they catch us, we're gonna die.

WASH
Quicker this way, at least.

MAL
(under his breath)
We're gonna die.

Zoe tightens her hand on Wash's shoulder as Wash steers the ship.

WASH
(to Mal)
Captain... There's nothing you can do here. If there's
someplace else you need to be, you know?
(beat)
Someone you need to talk to. In case.

INT. SERENITY – GALLEY – NIGHT

Mal walks in, a man on a mission.

JAYNE
What's goin' on, Mal? We gonna die or what?

Mal looks around, doesn't find what he's looking for, heads across the room for the rear exit.

JAYNE (cont'd)
Mal?

INT. SERENITY – INARA'S SHUTTLE – NIGHT

Mal approaches the door and knocks.

MAL
Inara?

Beat, then Inara opens the door.

INARA
Mal?

The ship bobs and weaves under them, and Inara starts to fall. Mal catches her, and the two look into one another's eyes.

EXT. SPACE

Serenity, spinning and twisting, enters the planetary rings, which are like a river of icy debris. The hull gets hit once, twice, but the ship stays intact.

Unlike the first gunship that pursues, which slams into a giant chunk of ice and explodes.

INT. SERENITY – COCKPIT – SAME TIME

Zoe smiles down at her husband. Wash leans forward.

INT. SERENITY – INARA’S SHUTTLE – NIGHT

Standing in the doorway of the shuttle, Inara and Mal are in one another’s arms. The ship rolls beneath them.

MAL

Inara, I...

EXT. SPACE

Serenity cuts a course through the planetary rings.

The surviving Alliance ships and the slaver ship veer off and begin to go the long way around the ring.

But Serenity has such a lead that they can’t catch up.

INT. SERENITY – COCKPIT – NIGHT

Wash leans back and relaxes. Zoe crouches down and kisses him hard.

INT. SERENITY – GALLEY – SAME TIME

Everyone looks around as the ship levels off. River continues to look behind them.

RIVER

Fish is still alive. Broke the line, but still on the hook.
Always on the hook.

INT. SERENITY – INARA’S SHUTTLE – SAME TIME

They’re still looking into one another’s eyes.

INARA

Mal, I—

MAL

Inara...

The ship levels off. Inara looks away.

INARA

I got a wave from the Guild, Mal. They found a new home for me. I need you to make it our next stop.

EXT. SPACE

The patrol boat and the slaver ship are docked with one another. The two remaining gunships are there as well, but Serenity is nowhere to be seen.

INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER – BRIDGE – NIGHT

Wallace approaches Chien, looking uncomfortable.

WALLACE

I’m sorry we allowed them to escape, sir.

CHIEN

It’s not your fault, Lieutenant. You’re not trained to operate such a vessel.

(beat)

Good plan, nonetheless.

WALLACE

Thank you, sir.

CHIEN

We’ll get them next time.

WALLACE

Next time?

Chien holds up a document with an image of a Firefly-class vessel.

CHIEN

New orders. We’re to track them wherever they go.